



Organized by Debby Edmonds

VIEWS OF PRE-HISPANIC COLOMBIANS

When a young Muisca chief took office, he was coated with gold dust. Then he jumped from a raft into Lake Guatavita. This ceremony was the beginning of the legend of a city of gold and El Dorado, the gilded one.






By Alejandro Montes


The miniature, golden raft is in the Gold Museum in Bogota, Colombia. The museum tells a story from the past before the Spanish came in 1499. Notice the thick vault doors to protect the gold.





To the American Indians, gold wasn't viewed as a way to get rich. It was seen as a sign of prestige and used as an offering in religious ceremonies.

“Because of its colour, intense shine, and unchangeability, gold was associated with the sun. Gold ornaments expressed the celestial, divine origin of the ruler's power.” Quotations are from the Gold Museum Exhibit at Bogota, Colombia.





By Alejandro Montes

“The impassive face (without expression) transmits the idea of a stable, powerful leader.”



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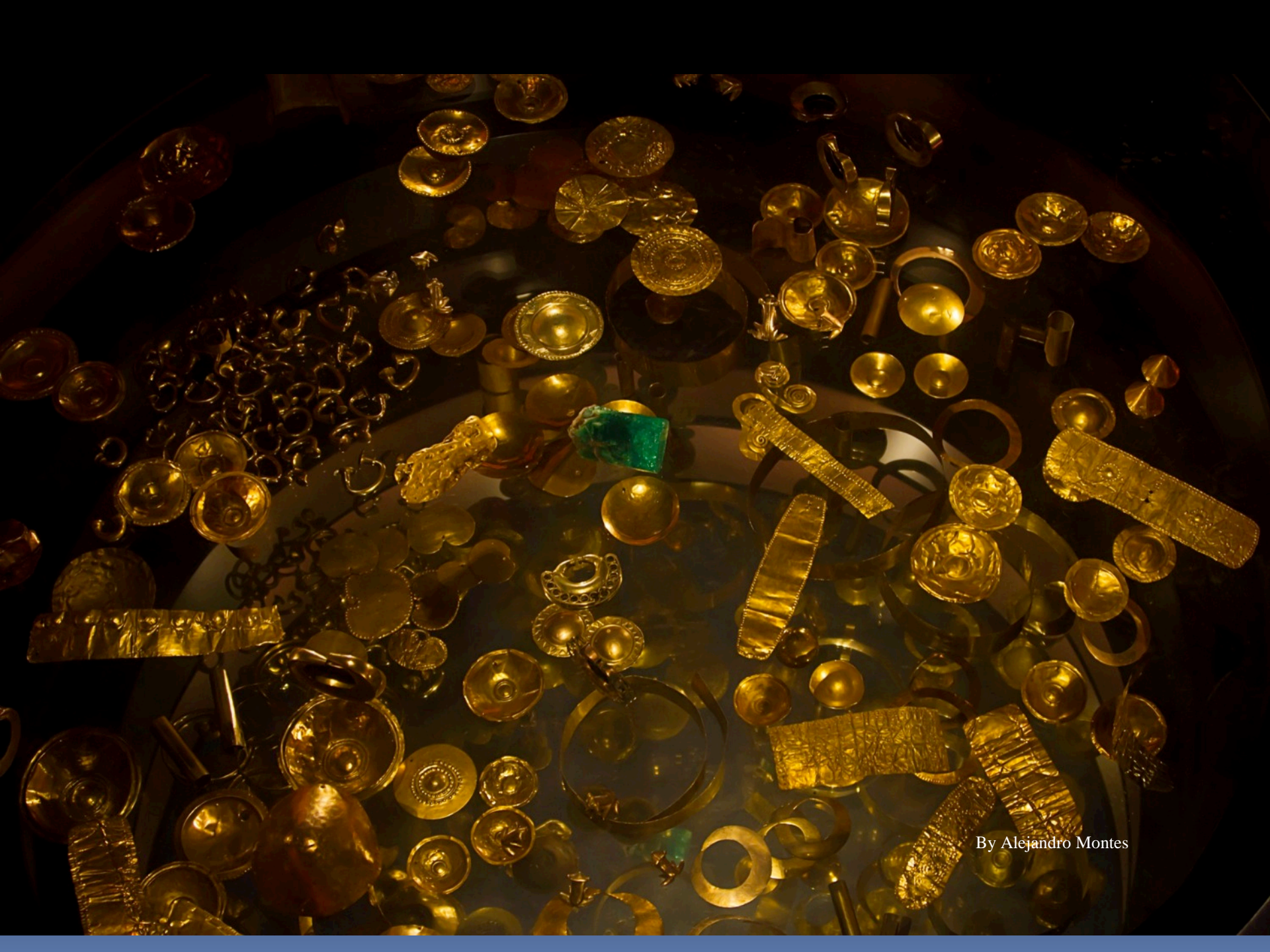
“During ceremonies, the hanging plates of ornaments twinkled in the light and gave off metallic sounds which helped transform those present and enabled them to communicate more easily with the gods.”











By Alejandro Montes



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“Miners were respected specialists who were held in high esteem because they knew the secrets of the earth and how to extract metals from it. Goldsmiths held a dual status since they combined technical and supernatural knowledge in their work: many of them were religious and political leaders.”

The Amerindians didn't see any big differences "between humans and non-humans. Persons, animals, plants, rocks, and objects are people, albeit different types of people..... Each people type has a particular way of viewing the world, its own perspective which is determined by its body....Putting on feathers, or ornaments, or painting the body means changing the body apparel and changing the view of the world."

In other words, the Amerindians believed that if a human put on a "second skin consisting of ornaments paint and clothing,"They perceived the world through the eyes of the crocodile, hummingbird, plant, ancestor, or divinity."



“When transformed into a vampire man, the person observed the world upside down, as a bird-woman , the person moved into other dimensions of the cosmos.”



“Birds symbolized the upper world. People, jaguars, and deer personified the intermediate one, while the lower levels were represented by bats, caimans, snakes, and other creatures which inhabited openings in the earth.”





By Alejandro Montes



“The metamorphosis (change) that occurred in certain animals, such as insects and batrachians (frogs), represented the never-ending cycle of life, death, and rebirth that all beings are subjected to.”



“Time was conceived as being cyclical or like a spiral, inspired by events repeated in nature, such as movements of the stars, animals reproducing, ...”



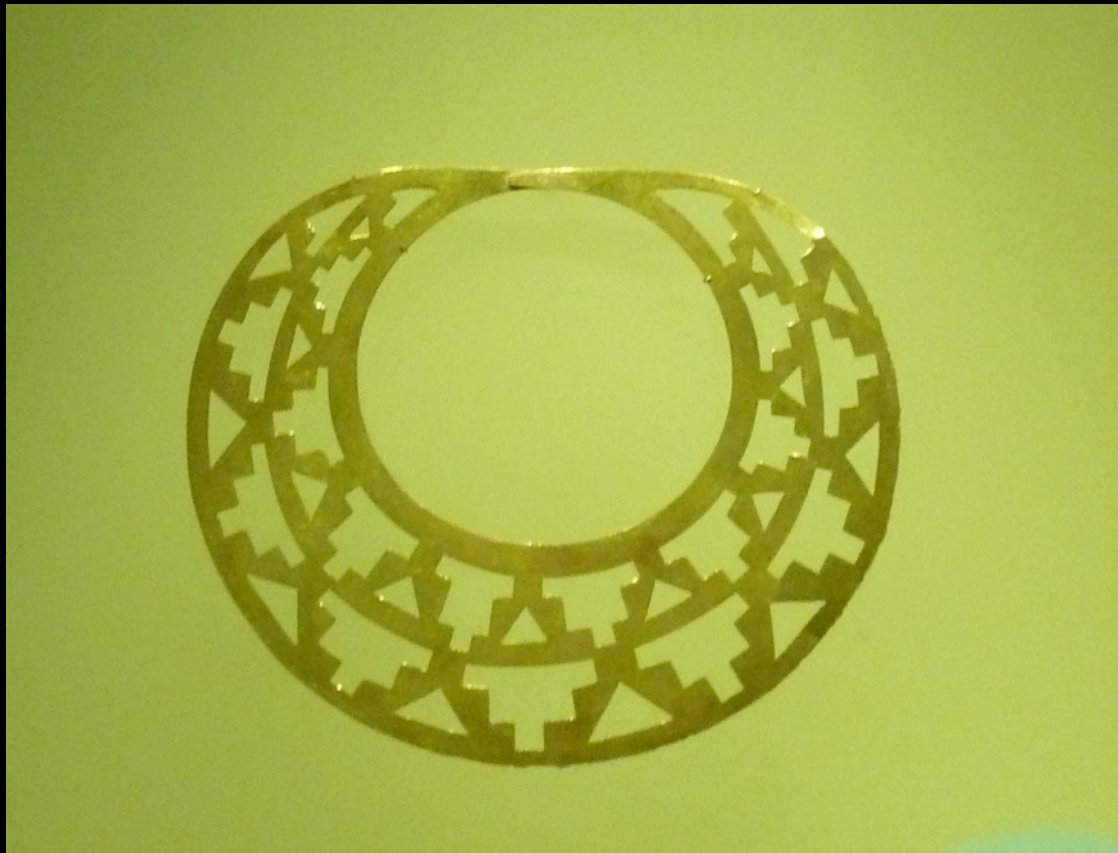


“The snake with a head at each end appears associated with the sun as a symbol of its eternal movement to and fro between two opposite points on the horizon. It was from this movement that life originated.”









“Symmetry and balance in the shapes and designs of objects were the expression of concern to find equilibrium (balance) in the properties and forces of the cosmos.”

“Cosmologies gave societies and its surroundings a place in the universe. All things acquired a location and a meaning, and they were interwoven in a deep symbolism. According to myths, at the beginning of time the creators gave people all they needed to live.”

“Tolerance” by Hal Weaver from

<http://www.last.fm/music/+free-music-downloads/native+american+flute>

To learn more about The Gold Museum:

<http://www.banrepcultural.org/museo-del-oro>

<http://www.colombia.travel/en/international-tourist/sightseeing-what-to-do/recommended-tourist-attractions-special-reports/the-gold-museum>

Or Google the Gold Museum, Colombia, or El Museo del Oro on YouTube